

6. HOUSING

HOUSING AND POPULATION GROWTH OVERVIEW

One of the responsibilities of the planning board is to protect the health, safety and welfare of the community. Toward this end, this Master Plan addresses both issues of housing quality and quantity.

Between the years of 1980 and 1983, Rockingham County was the most rapidly growing county statewide. Development pressures associated with this growth have been felt countywide. Likewise, 1986-1997 was a very active period for new home construction in Newton. The current situation is leading to extensive development of the land available for housing units. (Refer to Table 13).

Table 13: Growth

<i>Year</i>	<i>New Houses</i>	<i>Additions</i>	<i>Subdivisions</i>	<i>Lots</i>
1986	20		11	29
1987	24	67	9	44
1988	20		6	9
1989	28	45	2	7
1990	16	67	6	12
1991	12	47		
1992	6	44	1	1
1993	12	52	2	2
1994	17	47	3	3
1995	34	23	6	23
1996	20	32	4	73
1997	63	28	6	23

(plus 22 barns and
sheds)

These figures are taken from the town Record.

HOUSING TYPE DISTRIBUTION

While it is important for towns to share the responsibility of providing an adequate housing supply, housing is an indicator of the way a town responds to the needs of its residents of various economic groups. State statutes and court rulings stress the need for towns to provide opportunities for a wide range of housing types. Newton presently fares well when evaluating income in light of this situation. (Refer to Table 14).

Table 14: Median Income

<i>Town</i>	<i>Median Income 1979/Family</i>	<i>Median Income 1979/Household</i>	<i>Median Income 1989/Family</i>	<i>Median Income 1989/Household</i>
Newton	\$21,442.00	\$20,054.00	\$45,465.00	\$41,419.00
Kingston	\$22,672.00	\$20,791.00	\$51,332.00	\$46,867.00
So. Hampton	\$21,062.00	\$19,886.00	\$50,331.00	\$47,813.00
Plaistow	\$23,233.00	\$21,504.00	\$45,711.00	\$43,058.00
East Kingston	\$21,964.00	\$20,230.00	\$46,914.00	\$43,654.00
Fremont			\$43,199.00	\$40,938.00
Danville			\$46,875.00	\$42,824.00
Kensington	\$21,215.00	\$20,263.00	\$47,083.00	\$44,773.00
Hampstead	\$23,750.00	\$21,305.00	\$52,275.00	\$43,458.00
Atkinson	\$26,494.00	\$24,882.00	\$62,743.00	\$58,239.00

With the elderly population growing every year, the need for adequate senior citizen housing will likewise increase . While there is one federally subsidized elderly housing development in Newton, additional units will soon be needed to accommodate elderly town residents wishing to remain in town .

To accommodate the needs of people who live and work in Newton, housing stock must continue to reflect the demand and diversity of Newton residents. If land use regulations are not amended, however , to encourage multi-family housing, single-family residential development will continue to comprise the bulk of housing stock in Newton. Therefore, to provide ample opportunity for a broad range of housing demand , land use regulations must be evaluated and modified to ensure the continuance of a diverse housing stock.

ENCOURAGING A VARIETY OF HOUSING TO MEET THE NEEDS OF ALL INCOME GROUPS AND AGES

Elsewhere in this document there are several references to new concepts of development , such as Open Space or Planned Unit types. Cluster zoning is being used efficiently in many towns. We strongly recommend that every effort be made to investigate their potential in Newton, as a creative response to the town's housing needs .

Also, assisted-living housing has been welcomed in many residential towns, and while they may require additional services that would need to be considered, they do not add to the burden of school funding . There are commercial enterprises that could find a good home in Newton, attracted by the town's rural environment, clean air, active church groups, and hospitable library. We urge the Planning Board and Selectmen to initiate an

investigation into this type of enterprise, possibly through consultation with other cities and towns that have them. Indeed, it might be helpful to actively recruit such developers and invite their proposals for consideration.

SEASONAL HOMES

Country Pond has served to attract many homes and cottages along the shoreline and surrounding area. Originally, most of this development consisted of seasonal homes built on small lots, resulting in a very densely populated area. Over the last 2 decades, however, the majority of these homes have been converted to year-round residences. The septic systems for these homes were not designed to accommodate the additional strain of year-round use. Similarly, the undersized lots cannot adequately diffuse the disposed wastewater generated by the systems. This overcrowding may result in pollution problems for the more densely developed areas of Country Pond in both Newton and Kingston.

The values of lakefront property and development pressures have increased the problems associated with the congestion in this area. These will intensify if additional steps are not taken to regulate shoreline development. There are relatively few opportunities for seasonal home conversions available at this time, but campground pollution continues to be a serious threat.

HOME OCCUPATIONS

Home occupations are businesses associated with, but subordinate to, residential use. There are numerous home occupations scattered throughout Newton. By regulation, home occupations are supposed to be customary and incidental to residential use. Many so-called home occupations in Newton have crossed over the somewhat ambiguous line distinguishing them from commercial businesses or light industry. To prevent further erosion of this distinction and the ensuing land use conflicts, Newton must address this problem through enforcement of all existing regulations pertaining to home occupations.

INCOME DISTRIBUTION

Another test of the effectiveness of Newton's housing policy is to examine the income distribution of its residents. From Table 14 it is clear that Newton houses a slightly above-average proportion of the region's lower income households. Overall, however, Newton emerges as a community with an income distribution fairly comparable to that of the region and county with a median family income of \$45,465. (Refer to Table 14).

LOCAL REGULATIONS

GROWTH MANAGEMENT

Rapid increases in population can cause major problems, particularly for small communities. The result can be inadequate public facilities, loss of control over tax rates, and health and safety problems. In an effort to responsibly address concerns associated with rapid growth in Newton and the projected increases, the town enacted an Interim

Growth Management Ordinance in 1985, restricting the number of new building permits issued to 27. The purposes of this article were:

- to insure that the rate of growth of the town experienced in the coming years does not unreasonably interfere with the town's capacity for planned, orderly expansion of its services to accommodate such growth and,
- to provide time for the town to update the Master Plan and develop a Capital Improvements Program and growth management process..."

It is important to note that, while the Revised Statutes Annotated provide for the opportunity for communities to implement a growth management regulation, the courts have stressed that such an ordinance must be viewed as a temporary measure directed at phasing in growth.

It would be wise to re-examine the need for a growth management regulation at this time, to provide an opportunity for the town to determine land availability and consider future use. Such a hiatus would allow for an assessment of town needs for public building, recreation, and open space as well as adequate housing while sufficient land is still available. (Refer to Figure 4).

In order to comply with RSA 674-23, it is important that the town look toward ways of responsibly managing growth to best accommodate the needs and desires of the community.

ADDITIONAL CONSIDERATIONS

Newton residents have expressed a desire to manage growth of the town so as to ensure that a planned, orderly expansion of services can accommodate such growth and so as to preclude the immediate necessity for municipal water and sewer facilities. To protect water quality, therefore, capacity of soils to handle septic systems is an important consideration in determining lot size requirements.

A further consideration in determining lot size requirements is the cost of purchasing land. In many residential areas, land costs may effectively exclude development suited to low-income households. For example, while mobile home parks are allowed in residential districts in subdivisions no less than 20 acres, each mobile home must be located on lots of a minimum of 60,000 square feet. This requirement necessitates development of large areas and construction of a lengthy road network to service the entire subdivision.

As illustrated above, some traditional subdivision controls add costs to development through requirements such as street specifications. Alternatively, new concepts in development such as open space development or Planned Unit Developments can significantly reduce costs of both roads and structures. Furthermore, these types of development have the added benefit of preserving open space, while continuing to provide a wide variety of housing options.

Table 15: Population History 1767-1990

<i>Year</i>	<i>Population</i>	<i>People Per Square Mile</i>	<i>Acres Per Person</i>
1767	529	53.4	11.97
1775	540	54.4	11.73
1786	343	34.6	18.47
1790	530	53.5	11.95
1800	450	45.5	14.08
1810	454	45.9	13.95
1820	477	48.2	13.28
1830	510	51.5	12.42
1840	541	54.6	11.71
1850	685	69.2	9.25
1860	850	85.9	7.45
1870	856	86.5	7.4
1880	1006	101.6	6.29
1890	1064	101.75	5.95
1900	924	93.3	6.85
1910	962	97.2	6.58
1920	872	88.1	7.26
1930	848	85.7	7.47
1940	900	118.5	7.04
1950	1173	118.5	5.04
1960	1419	143.3	4.46
1970	1920	193.9	3.3
1980	3068	309.0	2.06
1990	3473	350.8	1.82

HOUSING RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations are designed to continue Newton's positive position in providing diverse housing opportunities, promoting community goals, improving local housing controls, and ensuring compliance with relevant state and federal legislation.

- **Multi-Family Housing:** New opportunities should be provided for new multi-family development as well as conversion of some large older houses to duplex and multi-family structures. Furthermore, the Senior Citizen Housing zone should be incorporated into the residential district as a clustered multi-family development.

In conjunction with these changes, the town should adopt design criteria and standards to ensure new development is consistent with existing neighborhood characteristics (e.g., requiring facades to remain as single entrance, screening off-street parking, etc.).

- **Open Space Development:** As development pressures increase, preservation of the rural character of Newton will require implementation of innovative zoning techniques. One such technique is cluster zoning or open space development. It is recommended that the Planning Board develops and adopts an open space development ordinance. This would allow the town to more efficiently use its prime developable land by encouraging developers to cluster housing units in a higher density in exchange for preserving the remainder of land as open space. This will serve the dual purpose, particularly for mobile home subdivisions, of decreasing development costs while preserving the town's valuable natural resources.
- **Manufactured Housing:** Newton's housing zoning should be updated to reflect advances in manufactured homes.
- **Home Occupations:** Regulations pertaining to Customary Home Occupations should be more comprehensively enforced. The zoning ordinance should be rewritten to regulate acceptable home office occupations through performance standards instead of by a list of accepted businesses. The planning board should investigate the registration of home businesses.
- **Public Awareness:** In order to promote town vote for passage of good zoning, the public should be well informed of the effects of a proposed ordinance through the news media.
- **Cluster Zoning :** Since cluster zoning has been defeated several times by the town, the Master Plan Committee should investigate improve wording or education to improve the opportunity of passage at a later date.
- **Water Supply:** Zoning regulations should be considered requiring sufficient availability of water prior to allowing development.
- **This critical section needs further analysis and more detail.** It should be a high priority once the 2000 census data becomes available.